

Gelitin

[Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society, University of Chicago](#)
[5701 South Woodlawn Avenue](#)

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By Barbarita Polster



Gelitin, *Democratic Sculpture 7*, 2023,
wood, stretched canvas, discarded clothing,
5' x 25' x 9' 6".
Installation view.

In the egalitarian world of gargantuan pizza slices, all human subjects level as toppings, disembodied and evenly distributed. *Democratic Sculpture 7*, 2023, invites visitors to press their heads through holes in the stretched- canvas surface of a gigantic fabric pizza wedge, emerging as garnishes among the tomato-and-cheese-colored clothing items comprising the piece. Professional rabble-rousers, Viennese art collective Gelitin presents this sculpture as part of the fifth Chicago Architecture Biennial. Behind the veneer of impishness, however, stands an urgent reassertion of the poeticism of play as political device.

As onlookers circling the work dissolve into the shadows of the imposing university gallery's floor-to-ceiling wood paneling, the brightly lit, flesh- colored materials and animated faces of participants take on a quality evocative of Thomas Eakins' visceral 1875 painting, *The Gross Clinic*, in which a dark crowd of medical students gazes upon a procedure performed in the spotlight of a surgical amphitheater. The

crimson and beige garments strewn across the surface of Gelitin's piece further a barbarous contrast: silk neckties, hospital socks, sweaters, leopard-print blouses—all are items rendered useless as the canvas pizza stands in as the sole corpus of the willing participants. But the lateral view returns us to a state of playful relief, as bodies are restored and supporting benches are revealed, and where participants may be seen extracting themselves from the underside of the structure.

The seemingly outlandish assertion of this sculpture as "democratic" belies a not-so-simple distribution of relationships between corpora (be they individual bodies or bodies of knowledge), liberal ideals, and aesthetics. The circulation of food, clothing, people, and information figures prominently into Gelitin's recipe, with the work's absurd humor acting first as a savory entry point for engagement, and then as a self-consciously critical means of reassessing underlying humanistic values.